

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-3005

March 6, 2017

The Honorable Paul Ryan
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
U.S. Capitol H-232
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
U.S. Capitol S-230
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Ryan and Majority Leader McConnell:

I am concerned that any final legislation between the House and Senate to repeal the Affordable Care Act (ACA) would impede or rollback the closure of the ACA's Medicare Part D prescription drug benefits gap—ultimately affecting millions of seniors on limited budgets. As you know, the ACA Medicare Part D reform closed the prescription drug coverage gap frequently referred to as the “donut hole.” This lifesaving benefit ensures millions of American seniors have the health care security they deserve. With ACA's prescription drug reform efforts, more than 9.4 million have saved \$15 billion on prescription drugs since passage.

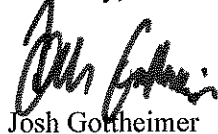
For more than a decade, Medicare Part D has provided seniors across the country with access to affordable prescription drugs. Before Part D, seniors suffered sticker shock from sky-high drug costs and often skipped on purchasing necessary medication. Since then, the Medicare prescription drug benefit has saved countless lives with affordable drugs and reduced out-of-pocket costs. Last year, 71 percent of Medicare beneficiaries – over 40 million Americans – benefitted from Part D. Despite this, many of the early Part D drug plans suffered from a critical gap in benefits that required seniors to pay 100 percent for drugs costs between \$2,800 and \$4,550 of annual total spending. When seniors fell into this gap, they were often forced to make an impossible choice between filling their prescriptions or buying groceries—burdens seniors should not have to bear again.

Thanks to the ACA, the Part D donut hole is nearly closed and will be completely closed by 2020. This means that seniors across the country are now saving an average of \$1,950 per year on drugs. This reform lifts seniors out of economic uncertainty and saves countless lives by increasing drug availability. Eliminating the donut hole also improves compliance and health outcomes among seniors, ultimately leading to lower spending on expensive acute care.

I am deeply concerned your efforts to repeal the ACA will ultimately reopen the Part D donut hole. This would crush seniors with heavy drug costs and extreme economic hardship. We must continue to build on the many benefits of Part D by committing to continuous coverage for medications. After paying into the Medicare system throughout their working lives, seniors should never be forced to worry about the future of this modest, earned benefit.

We cannot allow millions of seniors to fall into the donut hole again. I strongly urge you to continue to close the Medicare Part D coverage gap to guarantee seniors' access to affordable lifesaving medications. I will not support any House or Senate legislation that reduces or eliminates this important benefit.

Sincerely,



Josh Gottheimer
MEMBER OF CONGRESS